

A PROLONGED standing ovation from the 30,000 crowd acclaimed another heroic display by gallant Wycombe Wanderers in the FA Cup third round replay against first division Middlesbrough at Ayresome Park on Tuesday night — when only a last-gasp, last-minute goal saved the professionals from another humiliation.

The frantic cheering from the home supporters as well as from the hundreds of Wycombe fans was a well-deserved tribute to 'magnificent Wycombe', whose great-hearted display again confounded the critics and put the professionals on the rack before the dramatic goal in the 89th minute ended the epic.

After the drama and triumph of the Wanderers' achievement in the first game at Loakes Park on Saturday, more than 800 Wycombe fans flocked by plane, coach and car to Middlesbrough to back the Blues' second-chance bid — to be rewarded with another pulsating encounter in which the professionals had to fight all the way.

And back in Wycombe it was "Hats off to the heroes" when the Wanderers, who had flown up to Teesside from Heathrow on Monday night, returned by coach on Wednesday morning after their busiest, bravest two games in four days in the club's 90-year history.

Cash boost

"We'll murder them" had been the rash forecast for the replay of Middlesbrough manager Jack Charlton after he had confessed that the Wanderers had 'frightened him to death' in the first game.

But so far from any slaughter of the innocents, the Wanderers, running and challenging with renewed

resolution, had Charlton biting his nails again until the last agonising minutes.

Apart from the glory of achievement, enhancing the Wanderers' reputation as never before, these two games will give a big boost to the club's finances — with something like £6,000 from



A 'Free Press' special four-page supplement on the big match added to the interest at Loakes Park — and here 'Free Press' reporter Lindy Brookling is helping to distribute it — free.

the replay and £3,000 from the first game.

Altogether Wycombe's record-breaking FA Cup run this season should net them not far short of £12,000.

Nine coaches, many cars and several privately-chartered planes carried the 800 Wycombe supporters to Middlesbrough for the replay.

The enthusiasts were determined not to be baulked after learning that their hopes for a special train had been dashed — because British Rail could not find sufficient crows.

A British Rail spokesman had explained that laying on a long-distance train re-

quired not just one driver but several crews for four or five changes along the line.

Stuart Stanley, of Highwood Avenue, Booker, and his pals have rarely missed a Wanderers' match — whether home or away. And they were determined not to miss the Middlesbrough game.

So they booked their own aircraft, a twin-engined Britten Norman Islander through Wycombe Air Centre officials at Booker Airpark. The cost — a mere £200 — which Stuart says was "cheap at the price".

Each member of the party chipped in with just over £22 apiece, and they shared the cost of a taxi to and from Teesside Airport to Ayresome Park, a distance of about eight miles.

Saving

The return flight was made to Heathrow — and cars were laid on there by friends at midnight to bring the fans back to Wycombe.

Stuart, who works at Rye Engineering, Lancaster Road, High Wycombe, reckons they actually saved money by chartering an aircraft for the trip.

"If we had travelled by road none of us would have been fit for work the next day and we would have lost money there, quite apart from the cost of the journey by road", he said.

He and his pals, including Donald McFarlane, who lives at Grove Road, Sands, teamed up together some years ago on the terraces at Loakes Park.

'In style'

"We feel we owe the Wanderers quite a lot", he said. "We are all good mates together, and enjoy the matches."

They have travelled to most of the team's away

games, including the replay at Bournemouth recently, and the Amateur Cup game against Blyth Spartans last season, when they also flew up — but on that occasion it was a scheduled flight from London Airport.

"We all love flying, and the match at Middlesbrough gave us a chance to hire our own aircraft and really travel in style", he said.

After 80 years

WYCOMBE Wanderers' fans, lost in the week's cup-tie atmosphere, may like to reflect on the curiosity that it all happened once before — the unlikely matching of the 'the Blues' and Middlesbrough also took place 80 years ago.

For in 1895, Middlesbrough, themselves an amateur team then, visited Wycombe for what the 'Free Press' of the day described as "the tempting titbit of £15."

At the time of the trip the 'Boro were carrying all before them in the world of amateur soccer. They were Amateur Cup holders — an immensely prized trophy in the 1890's, competed for by such giants as Corinthians and Old Carthusians.

In October they were on tour in the south and on October 28 paid their historic visit to "the chair metropolis."

One sign of the times was that the match — played at the end of October — was only Wycombe's tenth of the season.

Another difference between this match and Saturday's Loakes Park clash was the money involved. More than £6,000 flowed through the turnstiles for the cup-tie, while in 1895 the proceeds of the match amounted to the princely sum of £16. Bearing in mind the fact that Middlesbrough's price was £15 there was precious little for the kitty.

And the result of the 1895 encounter? Wanderers were soundly beaten by three goals to one.

